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Disaster Rapid Action Force personnel loading rescue equipment on to a vehicle ahead of Yaas' landfall in Odisha | BISWANATH SWAIN

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YAAS' LIKELY LANDFALL NEAR BALASORE ON WEDNESDAY

It is expected to intensify into a very severe cyclonic storm on the east coast, where most of the oxygen plants are located

MAY TRIGGER HEAVY RAINS, STORM SURGE

The storm would generate speeds up to 165 kmph, gusting to 185 kmph, besides triggering storm surge on the coasts of Balasore, Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapara and Bhadrak in Odisha. Heavy rainfall predicted in parts of West Bengal, including Kolkata. In a review meeting, home minister Amit Shah assured all help to CMs of West Bengal, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh

AIRPORTS, PORTS ON HIGH ALERT

- Odisha airports are on high alert even as the Kolkata Port has decided to suspend all shipping movements from Tuesday
- The Paradip Port Trust has directed all vessels to pick up anchors and move to sea; massive evacuation works underway in Odisha
- Medicine, oxygen stocks replenished to ensure Covid treatment

149

NDRF TEAMS DEPLOYED TO CARRY OUT RESCUE AND RELIEF WORKS

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Delhi Police at Twitter's doorstep

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ New Delhi

DAYS after Twitter tagged a tweet by BJP leader Sambit Patra — alleging the Congress had drafted a toolkit to malign the Centre's image — as 'manipulated media', the Delhi Police Special Cell on Monday landed at the social media giant's offices in search of the 'right person' to serve a notice.

Calling it a routine process, and not a raid, Delhi Police spokesperson DCP Chenmoy Biswal said they had to visit Twitter's offices at Lado Sarai and Gurugram Golf Course Road as the reply from the company's MD, India operations, M Maheshwari was 'ambiguous'.

The special cell had issued a notice on Maheshwari on May 21, asking him to appear before it with information on why the platform tagged Sambit's tweet as 'manipulated media'. "It appears that Twitter has information, which is not known to us, on the basis of which they classified it as such. The special cell wants to find out the truth. Twitter, which claimed to know the underlying truth, should clarify," he added. On May 18, Sambit Patra and other BJP leaders posted the screenshots of an alleged 'toolkit' and accused the Congress of creating it to malign the Centre's pandemic management. The Congress had responded by writing to Twitter, asking it to suspend Patra's account for posting a "forged toolkit".

HALO, BENGALURU!

It was a relief from the heavens, literally. For Bengalureans, stuck at home because of the Covid lockdown and depressed over rising numbers of infections and deaths, it was a bright sunny morning that greeted them on Monday, with a gift of big, colourful ring of rainbow around the sun. Messages with photos started flying quite early in the day, flooding people's inboxes. Pramod G Gaigali, Director, Jawaharlal Nehru Planetarium, said that the celestial phenomenon is called 22 Degree Halo or simply the Sun's Halo and that it is not a rare sight | VINOD KUMAR T | P2

EXPRESS READ

FDI jumps 19 pc to $59.64 bn in 2020-21: Govt

NEW DELHI: Foreign Direct Investment into the country grew 19% to $59.64 billion during 2020-21 on account of measures taken by the government in the realms of policy reforms, investment facilitation and ease of doing business, the Commerce and Industry Ministry said on Monday. Total FDI rose 10% to the "highest ever" of $81.72 billion during 2020-21.

Walk-in jabs for 18+ at govt hosps

Centre aims to reduce wastage while giving full access to those unable to book online

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ New Delhi

THE Centre on Monday allowed walk-in vaccinations at government hospitals for people in the 18–44 age group to reduce vaccine wastage. It was also an acknowledgement of the point put across by states that not all beneficiaries may have access to internet or smart phones or mobile phones to register themselves on the CoWIN portal.

The final decision on whether or not to opt for it will be taken by state governments.

While announcing the decision, the Union health ministry clarified that those choosing private hospitals for inoculation must continue booking slots via CoWIN portal or Aarogya Setu app. The decision came after several states reported vaccine wastage whenever some registered beneficiaries failed to turn up. In such cases, on-site registration of a few beneficiaries may be necessary to minimise the wastage, the health ministry said.

Advising states to exercise caution to avoid overcrowding at centres, the ministry said clear instructions must be issued to all immunisation officers that the decision of respective states on walk-in facility is strictly adhered to.

Stating that fully reserved sessions can be organised for beneficiaries belonging to facilitated cohorts (those needing assistance) category, the ministry said: "Wherever such sessions are organised, all efforts must be made to mobilise such beneficiaries in sufficient numbers."

Till Monday, only those above 45 years were allowed the benefit of walk-in jabs. By allowing on-site registration for those in the 18-44 category, the ministry aims to cut wastage and increase the number of beneficiaries. Official data reveal that only about one crore people in the 18-44 group — out of an estimated 49 crore across India — have received at least one dose since they became eligible on May 1.

NATIONWIDE	MAY 23	MAY 24
Fresh cases	2,40,842	2,22,315
Recoveries	3,55,102	3,02,544
Deaths	3,741	4,454

JAB-O-METER
TAKE YOUR SHOT
May 23: 9,42,722 doses
May 24: 23,65,395 doses
TOTAL DOSES: 19,84,43,550

Things getting better than earlier, says CM after Covid war room visit

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

CHIEF Minister B S Yediyurappa on Monday said his government is considering doling out a few more financial aid packages as part of the Rs 1,250 crore economic relief announced earlier last week.

After visiting a BBMP war room at Domlur, he said, "The shortage of oxygenated beds has lessened considerably. We are also making continuous efforts to increase ICU beds to meet the demand. At 25 Covid Care Centres in Bengaluru, 3,000 beds, including 1,000 oxygenated ones, are available. These centres have doctors, nurses, food, medicine and other essentials."

Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa at the BBMP war room at Domlur in Bengaluru, which he visited on Monday | EXPRESS

Appealing to those living in slums and villages to voluntarily move to CCCs if they test Covid-positive, he said, "Since their houses are small, chances of infection spreading faster is high." He said, "I interacted with the war room staff for 45 minutes. I attended to one call and the caller wanted an ICU bed, which was arranged immediately. Things have become better."

He denied that the BJP central leadership is evaluating his ministers and their performance on the management of Covid second wave.

He was accompanied by Bengaluru Central MP PC Mohan, Deputy Chief Ministers Dr CN Ashwath Narayan and Govind Karjol, Congress MLA from Shantinagar NA Haris and BBMP Chief Commissioner Gaurav Gupta. P4

FROM ACROSS THE STATE

23.28% POSITIVITY RATE ON MONDAY

1,08,723 SAMPLES TESTED ON MONDAY

TOTAL VACCINATIONS **1,21,97,196**

- As part of its Covid-testing drive, the government will cover 1,500 villages a week, sending mobile testing units with medical staff to each location
- Government supplies 30 ventilators and 25 oxygen concentrators to Hassan Institute of Medical Sciences
- Shivamogga trust enables people, who cannot afford pulse oximeters, to get tested for free at neighbourhood shops

KARNATAKA	MAY 23	MAY 24
Fresh cases	25,979	25,311
Recoveries	35,573	57,333
Deaths	626	529

States trim capex, vax adds to burden

ANURADHA SHUKLA @ New Delhi

HIGH market borrowing and sharp revenue decline due to the pandemic are forcing many states to cut capital expenditure, as they are struggling to foot the cost of the vaccine amid widening fiscal deficit.

"Many states, including Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Telangana and Odisha, are reducing capital expenditure by about 25-30%. If states have to incur the vaccine cost also, they would have to cut corners, which means lowering their capex," a senior member of Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council (PMEAC) said.

The only way to fix this is to have a centralised vaccine procurement policy, the member suggested. "State capex fall will not help the economy. Market borrowing has also cost in terms of interest burden. With GST shortfall to continue this year, this is not a good scenario. Till we are able to vaccinate all, the cost of the pandemic for the economy will continue to remain high, keeping recovery uncertain," the member said.

According to estimates, the total vaccination cost is ₹3.7 lakh crore for states at the highest vaccine price. This is large given the budgeted capital expenditure of states.

"If we map this scenario analysis with the budgeted FY22 total expenditure of 20 major states at the highest price point, the vaccine procurement is 16% of the total expenditure for Bihar and 12% for states like Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand," Soumya Kanti Ghosh, Group Chief Economic Adviser, State Bank of India said in a recent report.

26% more market borrowing in FY21

In FY21, 28 states and 2 UTs raised a total of ₹7.98 lakh crore via market borrowings, 26% higher than the borrowings of ₹6.35 lakh crore in FY20

An analysis of the states' finances suggests that since this year, too, they may have to borrow, they are cautious in raising money from the market. Also the increase in proceeds from cesses and surcharges from 3% of gross tax revenue in 2000-01 to 23.5% in 2020-21 has reduced the divisible pool and brought down the effective devolution share to about 30% of gross tax revenue.

STIR AMID PANDEMIC

Farmers stage a protest against the Haryana government after the police booked over 300 of them in connection with a clash earlier this month, in Hisar on Monday. The protest was later called off | PTI | P8

Technical snag hits 2 oxygen plants in Ballari, supplies to go down by 20 pc

BOSKY KHANNA @ Bengaluru

REPAIR and maintenance works after technical snags hit two oxygen producing plants in Ballari led to Karnataka's nodal officer for oxygen Munish Moudgil sounding an alert that supplies would be hit by 20 per cent over the next two days. It set off alarm bells on the shortage affecting the lives of Covid patients depending on oxygen.

Moudgil announced, "There is a crisis, as 220 metric tonnes (MT) of oxygen supply from Ballari has been reduced due to production problems and would be stabilised by Wednesday morning. So for the next two days, there will be a 20 per cent reduction in supply to all districts."

Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) Chief Commissioner Gaurav Gupta said hospitals have been told to make necessary arrangements. The oxygen supply, however, will not be stopped completely, Moudgil added.

Another senior BBMP official said hospitals have also been told to take in lesser numbers of critical patients and to keep sufficient buffer stocks of oxygen. The state gets 1,000 MT of oxygen daily, of which around 810 MT is locally manufactured and supplied. Of this 810 MT, around 340 MT is supplied to Bengaluru.

The two units of Praxiar and Air Waters generate 260MT.

CONTINUED ON: P4

3 ON SHORTLIST TO HEAD CBI; CONG SORE

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ New Delhi

A meeting of a high-powered committee comprising Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Justice of India N V Ramana and Leader of Opposition Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury on Monday to pick the new chief of the CBI saw the latter raising objections over the selection process.

"The way the procedure was followed, it was in conflict of the mandate of the committee. On May 11, I was given 109 names... and today by 1 pm, 10 names were shortlisted while by 4 pm, six names were shortlisted. This casual approach of the department of personnel and training is highly objectionable," Chowdhury's dissent note said.

According to sources, the names of senior IPS officers H C Awasthi, K R Chandra and V S K Kaumudi have been shortlisted for the job. Awasthi (1985, UP cadre) is the current DGP of UP; Kaumudi (1984, Andhra Pradesh cadre) is a special secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs; and Chandra (1985, Bihar cadre) is the current Director General of the Sashastra Seema Bal.

The meeting was held after a delay of around four months despite former CBI chief R K Shukla retiring on February 3. The agency is currently helmed by interim chief Pradeep Sinha.

Easy tools to manage the virus at the district level

M S SESHADRI, T JACOB JOHN AND MURU SUBRAMANI

FOUR peaks characterise the second wave of India's Covid epidemic — momentum peak (21.4.21), numerical peak of new cases two weeks later (6.5.21); acceleration peak of mortality (28.4.21) and numerical mortality peak three weeks later (18.5.21). Each state and district has these four peaks.

Yet, the dynamics of onset, tempo and peak are asynchronous even among districts of the same state. While many districts are in post-peak decline of the momentum, in others momentum is still accelerating. Every district should be able to look for the four peaks in their 'local epidemic curves' and take appropriate individualised district-level action.

To facilitate this, a set of easy-to-use Microsoft Excel Spreadsheets for health administrators are available for download from https://tiny.cc/covid-momentum. At a glance you can discern epidemic momentum and mortality acceleration, district-wise. How does this help? 'Social vaccine' and biological vaccine should be top priority in districts with rapid epidemic momentum. Short district level lockdown may be needed to buy time.

Post-peak decline in momentum indicates a substantial level of herd immunity; the proportion of vulnerable is low, manpower shortage and potential crowding at vaccination centres will argue against large vaccination drives. However, imminent mortality acceleration necessitates quick increase in hospital and critical-care beds, oxygen supply and essential drugs.

Districts with mortality curve deceleration should anticipate decreased demands for oxygen and essential drugs, and prepare to move surplus supplies to needy neighbours.

Such streamlined and science-based approach will optimise use of scant resources to manage the epidemic, reduce new infections and lower Covid mortality.

Full article: newindianexpress.com

Blind belief: Covid gallops in Gokak village on a dead horse!

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Belagavi

NO horsing around, take Covid precautions seriously, the government keeps reminding people. But at Konnur village in Gokak taluk, hundreds of people gathered to bid a final farewell to a "divine horse" that died on Sunday.

Ironically, the horse was expected to rid the village of Covid, but its funeral turned into a superspreader event with people gathering in large numbers and ignoring all Covid-related norms. The authorities have now sealed central part of the village and booked a case against 15 people for taking out a funeral procession.

The villagers had on Wednesday night let the horse go around the village on the instructions of Pawadeswar seer of Maradimath in Konnur village of Gokak taluk, believing that it had the powers to drive Covid away from the village. The only condition was that none of the villagers should see the animal at night.

It is a common myth in the village that such godly horses have earlier saved villagers from malaria, cholera and plague contagions decades ago. A similar horse march had been done during the Covid first wave too.

The Maradimath seer and the villagers held a meeting recently and decided to follow the same old tradition. After the event, the villagers were told to pray at Kadasiddeshwara temple for five Mondays and Fridays if they want to see the end of Covid.

CONTINUED ON: P5